

ILLUSTRATING THE SERMON: AN INQUIRY
INTO THREE MEDIEVAL PREACHING MANUALS

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Doctor of Ministry

by
James Herbert Mullins

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James H. Mullins

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JAMES HERBERT MULLINS,

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Faculty Committee

J. Justin Fether
Karen J. Torjesen

April 27, 1990

Date

Alb. J. Moore

Dean

ABSTRACT

Illustrating the Sermon: An Inquiry Into Three Medieval Preaching Manuals

James Herbert Mullins

This project is concerned with sermon illustrations. It assumes that a more thorough understanding of illustrations within sermons may be gained if a more thorough understanding of sermon illustrations from the Middle Ages is learned. How illustrations function within a sermon, how illustrations are selected for a sermon, and how illustrations have meaning within a sermon are integral to this project. Chapter 2 gives a three-part focus to the history of preaching to the Middle Ages including: the background of Christian preaching in Judaism and in the "works" of Jesus and Paul; the background provided for the late medieval theoreticians of sermons by Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Guibert of Nogent; and the five general characteristics of Medieval sermonizing.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 examine the manuals on preaching by: Alan of Lille, The Art of Preaching; Humbert of Romans, Treatise on the Formation of Preachers; and Robert of Basevorn, The Form of Preaching. While brief attention is given over to biography and general review of the manuals, the understanding of illustrations within each manual is stressed. Chapter 6 is a brief conclusion which provides directions for understanding illustrations.

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter	
1. Introduction	4
2. History of Preaching to the Middle Ages	7
3. Alan of Lille	21
4. Humbert of Romans	35
5. Robert of Basevorn	47
6. Conclusion	57
Bibliography	62

To:

My parents, Bill and Norma, who taught me to love great preaching.

My wife, Mary, who thinks my preaching is great (even though she doesn't have to).

My sons, Ben and Nate, who I hope will come to love great preaching.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

My purpose is to examine ways that sermons are illustrated by looking at functions of illustrations within sermons, selections of illustrations for sermons, and methods of determining true meanings of the illustrations themselves.

Ministers who preach regularly spend enormous amounts of time and energy seeking illustrations for their sermons. Whole chapters of books on preaching are devoted to the process of illustrating sermons. Entire volumes have been written on how to illustrate sermons, as well as listing useful illustrations.

Ministers seek illustrations for various reasons. Some use illustrations to clarify some thought they wish to communicate. They use illustrations because they have found that illustrations are more powerful than discursive speech. Other preachers simply use illustrations as attention-getters throughout the sermon. They have found that by using an occasional anecdote audience attention is maintained. Some preachers use illustrations for emotional appeals.

In recent years story and inductive preaching have become popular. Fred Craddock in his books As One Without Authority, Overhearing the Gospel, and Preaching along with Steimle, Niedenthal, and Rice's book, Preaching the Story, have

impacted preaching and the use of illustrations tremendously. These books point us to the simple fact that the illustration is the message. This may be seen in the parables of Jesus. The parable of the good samaritan was not to clarify the point. The parable was the point.

A more in-depth understanding of illustrations would seem to be in order.

My thesis is that a more significant understanding of how illustrations work in preaching may be gained if one studies how illustrations worked in sermons in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.

This project investigates the use of illustrations in sermons from three medieval texts, one from the twelfth century, one from the thirteenth century, and one from the fourteenth century. The texts to be investigated are The Art of Preaching by Alan of Lille, Treatise on the Formation of Preachers by Humbert of Romans, and The Form of Preaching by Robert of Basevorn.

While each of these texts has a great deal of information concerning preachers, preaching, and audiences, this project will only seek to understand the functions of illustrations found therein.

Chapter 2 has three parts: the background of Christian preaching in Judaism and in the "works" of Jesus and Paul; the background provided for late medieval theoreticians of sermons by Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Guibert of Nogent; and the five general characteristics of medieval sermonizing.

Chapter 3 has three parts: a brief biography of Alan of Lille; a discussion of Alan's book The Art of Preaching; and a discussion of Alan's understanding of illustrations.

Chapter 4 has three parts: a brief biography of Humbert of Romans; a discussion of Humbert's book, Treatise on the Formation of Preachers; and a discussion of Humbert's understanding of illustrations.

Chapter 5 has three parts: a brief biography of Robert of Basevorn, a discussion of Robert's book, The Form of Preaching; and a discussion of Robert's understanding of illustrations.

The concluding chapter draws together the information found in the three texts and makes some general conclusions concerning the functions of illustrations, the selection of illustrations, and the meanings of illustrations. Two current sermons are used as examples of comparison and contrast to the medieval use of illustrations.

CHAPTER 2

A Summary of History of Preaching to the Middle Ages

The history of preaching is as varied as the times in which the sermons were preached, as varied as the personalities of the preachers, and as varied as the audiences which heard the sermons. It is not possible to write a complete history of preaching because it is not possible to study all the sermons of all the preachers. It is certainly not possible to hear the sermons which in the final analysis is the way one ought to approach sermons. However, one may look at the instructions for preaching that have been handed down from each time period.

The origins of Christian preaching are to be found in Judaism. Jesus and Paul, both raised in the Jewish traditions, put these principles to work. DeWitte T. Holland places the origin of preaching with individuals who "prophesied" prior to the kingdom of Israel.¹ Holland then discusses the preaching of the prophets as well as the services of the synagogue as precursors to Christian preaching.² James J. Murphy in his book Rhetoric in the Middle Ages begins his discussion of preaching by mentioning the synagogue worship

1 DeWitte T. Holland, The Preaching Tradition: A Brief History (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 13.

2 Holland, 13-16.

in Christ's time as consisting of prayer, Scriptural reading, and Scriptural discussion.³

Jesus himself was the first Christian preacher. In their monumental work 20 Centuries of Great Preaching Fant and Pinson simply quote the Sermon on a Mountain, Matt. 5:1-7:29, as the representative form of Jesus' preaching.⁴ Douglas M. White declares that Jesus was primarily an expository preacher, and uses the example of Jesus quoting Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:16-22 for support.⁵ "The parables are perhaps the most characteristic element in the teaching of Jesus Christ," proposes C.H. Dodd,⁶ while Ruether suggests that Jesus' vision of the kingdom was essentially this-worldly, social and political.⁷ And so the discussion continues. There will probably never be an agreement as to the preaching thrust or meaning of Jesus. Murphy lists four ways that Jesus set an example for Christian Preachers.

Most importantly, he confirmed and reinforced the

3 James J. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 269.

4 Clyde E. Fant, Jr. and William M. Pinson, Jr, eds., 20 Centuries of Great Preaching, vol. 1. (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1971), 3-8.

5 Douglas M. White, He Expounded (Chicago: Moody, 1952), 20-1.

6 C.H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1961) 1.

7 Rosemary Radford Ruether, To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 14.

Judaic practice of using Scripture as proof; he distinguished carefully between parables and "direct" discourse; he distinguished between evangelizing (announcement) and teaching (exposition of doctrine); and finally he made constant comparison of earthly and divine through the use of analogy and metaphor.⁸

When one looks to study the preaching of the apostles one should begin the study by examining C.H. Dodd's book The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments. Dodd clearly shows the difference between the two types of preaching, kerygma and didache. Dodd outlines the kerygma as follows.

The prophecies are fulfilled, and the new Age is inaugurated by the coming of Christ.

He was born of the seed of David.

He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us out of the evil age.

He was buried.

He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.

He is exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God and Lord of quick and dead.

He will come again as Judge and Saviour of men.⁹

Thompson agrees that the kerygma is primary but changes its content somewhat.

1. The age of fulfillment, or the coming of the kingdom of God, is at hand.

2. This coming has taken place through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

3. By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God as the messianic head of the new Israel.

4. The Holy Spirit in the church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory.

5. The messianic age will shortly reach its consummation in the Second Coming of Christ.

⁸ Murphy, Rhetoric, 276.

⁹ C.H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (New York: Harper, 1936), 17.

6. Forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and salvation come with repentance.¹⁰

Murphy has formulated from Paul's writing a foundation for a theory of preaching that includes four elements. "First is his keen appreciation of the responsibility for persuasion which Christ's mandate thrust upon the Church."¹¹ Paul felt that the message itself contained power given from God. "Another element new with Christianity is the concern for the spiritual welfare of the hearer rather than for the success of the speaker."¹² "On the question of who should preach, Paul clearly believes that a divine "call" will identify the preacher."¹³ Paul relates his own experience of a "call" when he was blinded on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19). "Finally, Paul's efforts to set up a communication network among the new Christian churches had the indirect result of strengthening the position of the spoken word in Christian worship."¹⁴

Over the next twelve centuries, few writers paid attention to the theory of sermon writing in the Latin west. Three writers, however, stand out for the formative effect that they had on the later middle ages: Augustine, Gregory the Great,

10 Claude H. Thompson, The Theology of the Kerygma (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 3-4.

11 Murphy, Rhetoric, 282.

12 Murphy, Rhetoric, 282.

13 Murphy, Rhetoric, 283.

14 Murphy, Rhetoric, 283.

and Guibert of Nogent. The first major work on preaching is Augustine's On Christian Doctrine.¹⁵ Murphy overstates the importance of this work when he concludes that this work is the only work on preaching for twelve hundred years!¹⁶ It is to Augustine and On Christian Doctrine that we now examine briefly.

Charles Sears Baldwin wrote that Book 4 of On Christian Doctrine has great importance because "it begins rhetoric anew."¹⁷ Whatever the book's effect on rhetoric, it certainly has had and continues to have an affect on Christian preaching, not only because one of the church fathers wrote it but also because of its content.

Augustine begins by desiring that those who wish to preach should not only study the rules of speaking but should also study the preachers who speak well.

For those with acute and eager minds more readily learn eloquence by reading and hearing the eloquent than by following the rules of eloquence. There is no lack of ecclesiastical literature, including that outside of the canon established in a place of secure authority, which if read by a capable man, even though he is interested more in what is said than in the eloquence with which it is said, will imbue him with that eloquence while he is studying.¹⁸

"Augustine thinks that Christian preaching is to be

15 St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958).

16 Murphy, Rhetoric, 284-85.

17 Charles Sears Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic to Fourteen Hundred. (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959), 51.

18 Augustine, 119.

learned best from Christian preachers."¹⁹ Augustine spends some time on this argument and "shows how to learn from the Canon and the Fathers the rhetoric that is vital to homiletic."²⁰ Just what exactly is that rhetoric Augustine quickly moves to tell.

Augustine, quoting Cicero, said "that he who is eloquent should speak in such a way that he teaches, delights, and moves."²¹ Baldwin summarizes Augustine's argument,

The three are then both carefully distinguished and shown to be a sort of geometrical progression. The first is first of necessity. It must be mastered; but it is rarely sufficient. To supply the lack, the second demands more rhetoric by demanding further adaptation to the audience; but it too must remain insufficient. So the third task, to move, is not merely the third item in a classification; it is the final stage in a progress. That progress is increasingly emotional. The last stage demands not only all the rhetoric of the preceding, but also the art of vivid imagery and of urgent application.²²

Augustine further elaborated the progression,

It is necessary therefore for the ecclesiastical orator, when he urges that something be done, not only to teach that he may instruct and to please that he may hold attention, but also to persuade that he may be victorious. For it now remains for that man, in whom the demonstration of truth, even when suavity of diction was added, did not move to consent, to be persuaded by the heights of eloquence.²³

Augustine goes on to discuss the three manners of

19 Baldwin, 54.

20 Baldwin, 54.

21 Augustine, 136.

22 Baldwin, 66.

23 Augustine, 138.

speaking, the grand, the subdued, and the moderate.²⁴ The argument is made from Scriptural examples that various topics should be spoken in various manners. It is noteworthy that Augustine forbids the arid, and the tedious while emphasizing eloquence; he also recommends the use of charm.²⁵

As much as Augustine deals with style and content of preaching, he still concludes that it is the life of the preacher that will ultimately make the sermon most effective. "However, the life of the speaker has greater weight in determining whether he is obediently heard than any grandness of eloquence."²⁶ He adds,

In his speech itself he should prefer to please more with the things said than with the words used to speak them; nor should he think that anything may be said better than that which is said truthfully; nor should the teacher serve the words, but the words the teacher.²⁷

For Augustine in the final analysis, a good life will even overcome poor speech.

However, if he cannot do this, let him so order his life that he not only prepares a reward for himself, but also so that he offers an example to others, and his way of living may be, as it were, an eloquent speech.²⁸

Pope Gregory the Great is the next person to give instructions on preaching in Books III and IV of Pastoral

24 Augustine, 145.

25 Baldwin, 72.

26 Augustine, 164.

27 Augustine, 165.

28 Augustine, 166.

Care.²⁹ It is not considered to be a theory of rhetoric for preachers.³⁰

What Gregory does do, is to arrange seventy-two specific kinds of people and the way to preach to them. Murphy summarizes the gist of Gregory's work.

In short, Gregory's Pastoral Care is not a preceptive rhetorical treatise. It does not recommend ways to find and arrange ideas, nor how to put words to them before a living audience. Instead, Gregory stresses the preaching responsibility and then proceeds to summarize some moralizing approaches that might be made to thirty-six pairs of individual audience types. He treats sin as a "disease" to be removed with the help of the pastor, the Pastoral Care remains a treatise on moral pathology rather than a guide to future rhetorical practice. He answers the question, What to preach? He does not answer the question, How to preach?³¹

It is important to note that Holland does not even mention the Pastoral Care of Gregory.³² Yet it has its place in the history of preaching because of its widespread use among the clergy.

The next person who wrote on preaching that one should read is Guibert of Nogent. In his Memoirs, Abbot Guibert of Nogent tells the background to the writing of "How to Make a Sermon,"

I propose to undertake a moral commentary on the

29 Gregory, The Great, Saint. The Book of Pastoral Rule. Ed. and trans. James Barmby. In A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. 2nd Series. Vol. 12. Eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1956, 1-72.

30 Murphy, Rhetoric, 294.

31 Murphy, Rhetoric, 296-97.

32 Holland, 36.

beginning of Genesis, that is, the Six Days of Creation. To the commentary, I prefixed a treatise of moderate length showing how a sermon ought to be composed.³³

Thus, Guibert's treatise is a prologue to his work on Genesis rather than a specific work on preaching. Murphy concurs when he wrote that "In any case Guibert's A Book About the Way a Sermon Ought to Be Given is at best a very general discussion of preaching. It is more specific on the subject of Scriptural interpretation."³⁴

This now concludes the survey of preaching until the Middle Ages. The specific individuals to be discussed in later chapters are Alan of Lille and his The Art of Preaching, Humbert of Romans and his Treatise on the Formation of Preachers, and Robert of Basevorn and his The Form of Preaching. Prior to discussing the use of illustrations taught in these three volumes, a general discussion of preaching in the Middle Ages would be in order. The sermons of the late Middle Ages had a number of common characteristics.

In the Middle Ages sermons were generally spoken to one of two audiences. Baldwin explains,

Either they are for the lay folk in parish church or cathedral (sermons ad populum), and were preached in the vernacular; or they are for the clergy (sermones ad clerum), i.e., before synods, councils, schools, oftenest of all in monastery chapels, and were preached in Latin.³⁵

It is important to note that the very language in which the

33 Guibert of Nogent, Memoirs, trans. John F. Benton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 90-1.

34 Murphy, Rhetoric, 301.

35 Baldwin, 232.

sermon was preached was changed to fit the audience during this time.

Another factor of the preaching of the Middle Ages was the development of collections of material for use by the preacher in the sermon. The collections were as diverse as their authors or editors. Baldwin tells of one.

The great thesaurus of Jacques de Vitry is systematically practical, a collection not primarily of sermons, but for sermons. Models, outlines, suggestions, intended for adaptation in the vernacular are arranged according to the Church calendar: four books for the seasons, a fifth for the saints, with three expositions for each day, the first of the introit, the second of the epistle, the third of the gospel. The sixth book is classified for adaptations to typical social groups.³⁶

The most famous type of collections are called exempla.

Baldwin explains:

What has naturally most attracted modern historians in this storehouse is the abundance of illustrative descriptions and stories, the exempla. A resource prized in all times for popular address, the exemplum was so cultivated in medieval preaching as to call forth many collections. It looms unduly large to modern readers because the exempla have now an extraneous interest in reflecting medieval life, and because they were taken not only, as now, from contemporary life, from history, from legend, but also from the bestiaries.³⁷

Once again the emphasis taught by all this is that various approaches are to be taken in sermons to various audiences.

A third factor of medieval preaching is the development of preaching manuals. Three of the manuals are to be discussed specifically later in this work. James Murphy argues

³⁶ Baldwin, 234-35.

³⁷ Baldwin, 235.

that these manuals came to gather around several treatises which might be called a "rhetorical system."³⁸ Murphy lists five elements that comprise this system.

The rhetorical system afforded the medieval preacher had five elements:

1. The Scripture itself (with its glosses), furnishing both proposition and apodeictic proof;
2. Collections of exempla and other bits of information about man, animals, or the world;
3. Concordances, alphabetical lists, topic charts, and other bibliographical aids designed to help find material;
4. Collections of sermons, including sermon outlines and sermons for specified occasions;
5. The ars itself, corresponding to the type of preceptive rhetorical treatise written by Aristotle or Cicero.³⁹

Murphy states that the "intricate relations between the segments of this apparatus have never been fully investigated," and that one can "appreciate the value of each element only when he realized that purposeful interdependence." ⁴⁰

Symbolism could be the fourth factor in an understanding of preaching in the Middle Ages. Scripture was seen as having three levels of interpretation. The first level was the literal sense of the passage of Scripture. The second level was the moral sense of the passage. Baldwin illustrates this by the Psalms where the literal sense would be David and moral sense would be other poor souls of all times.⁴¹ Baldwin

38 Murphy, Rhetoric, 342.

39 Murphy, Rhetoric, 342.

40 Murphy, Rhetoric, 342-43.

41 Baldwin, 240.

continues,

But medieval interpretation always took a third step. Every psalm meant not only David, and further not only every "poor man" making it his own, but also "the man," the Lord incarnate to share all humanity and to give men "power to become the sons of God."⁴²

Thus, Christ was seen in every passage as the third and ultimate meaning of that passage.

A fifth factor of the medieval preaching patterns would be humor. Siegfried Wenzel has discussed humor in the medieval sermon in an article entitled "The Joyous Art of Preaching."⁴³ Wenzel outlines five ways that humor was expressed. It was expressed as moral instruction. A story concerning a grateful lion was told again and again to illustrate moral truth.⁴⁴

Social satire was another way that humor was expressed. Bailiffs, judges, lawyers, friars, professors of theology, and knights come under the scathing blast of humor in the pulpit.⁴⁵ Another favorite of the medieval preacher was the story of a duper being duped.⁴⁶ Tied with the duper being duped stories are the stories that reveal clever or funny tricks. "Often such stories are told at the expense of morally reprehensible

42 Baldwin, 240.

43 Siegfried Wenzel, "The Joyous Art of Preaching; or, the Preacher and the Fabliau," Anglia 97 (1979):304-25.

44 Wenzel, 307.

45 Wenzel, 315-16.

46 Wenzel, 316.

types, such as go-betweens or misers or idlers."⁴⁷ Many times these stories showed an underdog figure triumphing over an unpopular person. Wenzel says that "another outstanding feature of comic tales in sermons is their verbal wit. Quite often such tales lead up to a witty remark which involves word play or punning."⁴⁸ The approach to humor in medieval preaching was varied.

The use of humor was also varied. Sometimes its use was simply to please the audience and keep their attention. Other times it was to illustrate a point and make it memorable. Wenzel even goes so far as to suggest that the "preachers might themselves have taken delight in formulating a witticism."⁴⁹

It would seem that according to Wenzel we

should open our minds to the possibility that during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries preaching was not a dreary expanse of unrelieved moralizing but, on the contrary, contained a noticeable element of wit and joy, of humor, even of fun.⁵⁰

In this chapter I have sought to trace some of the influences on medieval preaching. The origins of Christian preaching are found in Judaism. Jesus and Paul form the bridge between Judaism and the preaching of the apostles.

47 Wenzel, 316.

48 Wenzel, 319.

49 Wenzel, 322.

50 Wenzel, 320.

Augustine influenced both the style and content of Christian preaching. Pope Gregory the Great gave practical advice to preachers. Abbot Guibert of Nogent wrote a general discussion of preaching. Medieval preaching can be characterized by the audience to which a sermon was given, the collections of materials available to the preacher, the manuals of preaching written for the preacher, the three different levels of meanings found in biblical texts, and in the humor used to keep the audience's attention.

CHAPTER 3

Alan of Lille

In 1960 when Alan of Lille's skeleton was exhumed at Citeaux, a more accurate understanding of Alan's life was unearthed. Before this scholars knew that Alan had died at Citeaux in 1202-3. But in 1960 it was determined that Alan had been between eighty-six and ninety-two when he died.¹ His birth has been placed somewhere between 1110 and 1120.

Alan was born in Lille of Flanders. His early years are still a mystery. At sometime it is thought that he was influenced by Gilbert de la Poree. He has been thought to have been in Paris between 1155 and 1165. Later Alan went to Montpellier where he was involved in the struggle with the Cathari and Waldensians. Early in the 1190s Alan was back in Paris and was considered a master teacher there. Alan probably joined Citeaux between 1194 and his death in 1202. It was at Citeaux that Alan wrote the Art of Preaching which was probably his last book written.

Alan was trained in the seven liberal arts prior to his turning to theology. His writings encompassed many forms of literature as well as topics including epic poetry, philosophy, speculative theology, commentaries, polemics against

¹ John M. Trout, "The Monastic Vocation of Alan of Lille," Analecta Cisterciensia 30, no.1 (1974): 46.

heretics, a theological dictionary as well as the Art of Preaching.

The Art of Preaching is divided into forty-eight divisions following the author's Preface. Only the Preface and the first chapter speak about preaching. The remaining forty-seven chapters are topics to be preached or audiences to be addressed. Chapter two is called "On Despising the World" while chapter three is entitled "On Despising Oneself." Other chapter titles include "Against Sloth," "Against Anger," and "Against Loquaciousness." Positive topics such as "On Peace" and "On the love of God" are also included. The eight audiences addressed by individual chapters are, Soldiers, Orators, Princes and Judges, the Cloistered Religious, Priests, the Married, Widows and Virgins. Alan used four authorities to lend support to his discussion of the divisions. He used the Biblical text, Patristic writings, secular quotations, and examples. For example in his chapter "Against Dissipation" Alan begins with a number of scriptural supports and then quotes Gregory the Great. Toward the end of the chapter, Alan contrasts Biblical examples. Jezebel is contrasted with the Virgin Mary. Joseph and Daniel are contrasted with David and Ammon. In the middle of this chapter Alan uses several mathematical formulas to drive home the case against dissipation. He speaks of three things in hell, three loathsome things in this vice, five steps of dissipation, three things that drive a man from his house. Alan uses multiple metaphors as well, such as filth, dung-pits, flies, emasculation, she-

goat of stinking lust, wolves, and intoxication to mention a few. This chapter is concluded by Alan stating that gluttony is the beginning of lust and dissipation and should be avoided at all costs.

In Alan's own Preface to the book, he uses the story of Jacob's vision of angels going up and down a ladder to explain the importance of preaching. For Alan the ladder has seven rungs with each succeeding rung being better than the previous rung.

The first rung of this ladder is confession; the second, prayer; the third, thanksgiving; the fourth, the careful study of Scriptures; the fifth, to inquire of someone who is more experienced if one comes upon any point in Scripture which is not clear; the sixth, the expounding of Scripture; the seventh, preaching.²

Later, Alan tells the readers that ascending the ladder implies preaching on holy, heavenly things, while descending the ladder implies preaching on behavior or conduct.³

Alan divides his chapter on preaching into five sections: the definition and types of preaching, the character of the preacher, the audience of the preacher, the motivation of the preacher, and the place of preaching.⁴ While Alan neither gives each section equal weight in argument nor treats them in order, it is possible to understand something of what Alan said about each section. Alan defines preaching as "an

2 Alan of Lille, The Art of Preaching, trans. Gillian R. Evans (Kalamazoo, Cistercian, 1981), 15.

3 Alan, 18.

4 Alan, 16.

open and public instruction in faith and behavior, whose purpose is the forming of men."⁵ Alan divides preaching into three types.⁶ The first is spoken to all. The written word would be Alan's second classification of preaching while good deeds would be the third. The character of the preacher is simply described as humility. The audience should be made aware of the profit of listening to preacher as well as being assured of the preacher's brevity. The motivation of the preacher is described in negative terms. Preachers should not teach error, thus being heretics whom Alan describes as jackals. Neither false praise nor earthly gain should motivate the preacher. Alan declares that the place of preaching should always be public. Speaking to one or two should be called teaching while only heretics speak secretly to large groups.

Throughout The Art of Preaching Alan illustrates his message by the use of contrasts. By placing two opposing ideas, persons, or thoughts Alan makes his point clearer. When Alan, in his chapter on preaching, wishes to underscore that congregations are not to be entertained, that the Word of God must be proclaimed fearlessly, and that popular favor is not won by profitable preaching, he encourages the preacher by saying that "It is not the sharpness of the thorn that

5 Alan, 16-17.

6 Alan, 20.

we should dwell on, but the sweetness of the rose."⁷ So preachers are encouraged to teach their listeners that the sharp Word of God will produce a pleasing effect in their lives.

In his chapter "On Despising Worldly Fears" Alan uses the contrast of a man standing between two millstones, one named fear and one named hope.⁸ Hope will keep a man's spirit from slacking and fear will keep that man's thoughts from wandering. It is the central place between hope and fear that one finds security.

Alan closes his chapter "On Spiritual Joy" with the contrast of what one has written with his sins versus what one can erase with appropriate actions, such as erasing false speech by confession, erasing evil thoughts written by contrition, and erasing evil deeds written in the past by current reparation.⁹ Alan uses mercy or clemency to be the difference between a king and a tyrant, between the truly pious and the cruel.¹⁰ The contrast between being driven out of their bodies and being driven out of their minds was used by Alan concerning the fortitude of the martyrs.¹¹ The bravery of the martyrs kept them free from the slavery to fortune or

7 Alan, 21.

8 Alan, 57.

9 Alan, 66.

10 Alan, 83.

11 Alan, 102.

to changeableness. No matter what happened to them physically they remained constant. They were unchanged in changing circumstances.

Alan contrasts bridling the tongue with capturing a castle in the chapter entitled "Against Loquaciousness."¹² The attack upon a castle merely involves the external while bridling the tongue involves the internal. Alan uses a contrast of bridling a horse or bridling a tongue in the same chapter.¹³ Horse bridles are used to keep a horse from running off with its rider which is physical danger while a bridle is needed on the tongue to keep the soul from danger.

Another contrast Alan used concerning preaching is found in the chapter called "To Whom Preaching Should Be Delivered."¹⁴ As the preacher preaches against various vices he should first use the knife to cut the listener and then use the poultice to console the listener. This is particularly effective against dissipated hearers but works for all other vices as well.

In the chapter "To Soldiers" Alan contrasts the two swords material and spiritual which correspond to the two parts of man, the body and spirit.¹⁵ The physical sword is used to keep injuries at bay and to maintain an uneasy peace

12 Alan, 108.

13 Alan, 108.

14 Alan, 147.

15 Alan, 150-51.

in the world. The spiritual sword is used to keep vexations of mind at bay and to maintain peace of heart.

Another method by which Alan illustrates his book and its messages is by the use of sequences. Jacob's ladder has already been mentioned above. It is the first use of sequencing in The Art of Preaching.¹⁶ The catholic man who would be perfect must ascend the ladder from confession to prayer to thanksgiving to careful study of Scripture, to inquiring of someone more experienced if the Scripture is not understood to expounding Scripture to preaching. Alan makes comment on each stage of the ladder and then states that although others have commented on various rungs, his purpose in The Art of Preaching is to explain the top rung, preaching.¹⁷ From both the order of the sequence and from Alan's concluding comments it is clear that Alan considers preaching the most important work available to man.

In his chapter "On Despising Oneself" Alan uses three sequences of mirrors to illustrate his thought. All three mirrors are threes. The first trio of mirrors includes the mirror of Scripture in which man sees his condition, the mirror of creation in which man sees his wretchedness, and the mirror of nature in which man sees his accusations.¹⁸ The second threefold set of mirrors is within man himself and

16 Alan, 15-16.

17 Alan, 16.

18 Alan, 29.

includes the glass of reason, the glass of the senses and glass of the flesh which turns its image of human nature upside down.¹⁹ The glass of reason teaches man what to avoid, earthly things, and what to embrace, heavenly things. This glass calls man to follow its instructions. The second glass is the glass of the senses which teaches the exact opposite of the glass of reason. This mirror is to be used to call men to control their senses by reason. The third glass is to call men to defeat carnal lusts. The last sequence of mirrors includes the mirror of providence in which one sees dangers and results in a vision of a clear conscience, the glass of circumspection in which one sees opposing vices and results in divine contemplation, and the glass of wariness in which one sees false virtues and results in eternal life.²⁰

A sequence of three dreams is used to illustrate Alan's chapter "Against Sloth."²¹ Here the importance is in descending order. The sequence begins with the dream of contemplation in which man sees visions of God and becomes like God. The middle dream of the sequence is the dream of the imagination in which man pictures for himself visible things and becomes spirit. The lowest or third dream of the sequence is the dream of idleness in which man dreams of foolishness, becomes a beast and is visited by the devil. Alan is en-

19 Alan, 29-30.

20 Alan, 30.

21 Alan, 43-4.

couraging preachers to warn their hearers of the downward peril of sloth.

Alan tells of four winds of pride that ruin a man in his chapter "Against Pride."²² Arrogance is the first wind which blows across the life of the proud man to cause him to credit himself with what he actually lacks. Insolence is a wind that causes the proud man to credit to himself what he owes to others. The third wind is boasting which credits more than is factual. And the last wind that swells the proud man is called quarrelsomeness which causes antiauthoritarian behaviors.

A most imaginative sequence is found in the chapter "On Perseverance."²³ The point being stressed is that one must not only begin well, one must also end well. Alan tells of the mythical beast, the chimaera whose head is the head of a man, whose middle is the belly of a goat, and whose end has the feet of a wolf. Again, this sequence descends by stressing a good beginning, followed by dissipation, and ending with greed. Perseverance is the only answer to such a downward trend in life.

Alan uses an ascending sequence in his chapter "On Fortitude."²⁴ There is the fortitude of the white-washed hypocrites who by it earn the shame of damnation, pursue a

22 Alan, 55.

23 Alan, 78.

24 Alan, 102-3.

falsity, and is found in false brothers and heretics. The second fortitude is of the philosophers who while they deny several evils they lack the principles of faith, hope, and love and thereby lose any merit of virtue. The final and highest form of fortitude is the fortitude of just men who make God their goal and who meet all their obligations.

In his chapter "Of Repentance or Satisfaction" Alan adds more sequencing. Sin is categorized into three.²⁵ There are the sins of thought for which contrition is the antidote. There are the sins of mouth for which confession is prescribed. And there are the sins of deeds for which reparation is the remedy. Alan also mentions a sequence of fire in this chapter.²⁶ The first fire is the fire of purgation which brings both satisfaction and an avoidance of the other two fires. The second fire is probative which is temptation that tests. The third fire is destructive which is eternal damnation.

An ascending sequence is found in the chapter "On Almsgiving."²⁷ The three-fold almsgiving are called cold, lukewarm, and hot. Cold almsgiving is done only to win human approval and deserves punishment. Lukewarm almsgiving is done out of natural instinct alone and avoids punishment while hot almsgiving is done from love's fervor and prefigures glory.

25 Alan, 127.

26 Alan, 127-28.

27 Alan, 130-31.

A final sequence is mentioned in the chapter "To Priests" and describes the four properties of salt.²⁸ Salt makes infertile soil so the priest must continually plow up the earthly thoughts of his listeners. Salt flavors food and the priest will avoid spiritual tastelessness by adding study to the Scriptures and good works to the Eucharist. Salt protects meat from decay and the priest must keep both himself and his hearers from dissipation and gluttony. Salt keeps worms out of meat and the priest must avoid evil thoughts and inordinate desires.

A third method of illustration used by Alan of Lille in the Art of Preaching is comparisons. In his chapter "On Preaching" Alan compares heretics to jackals.²⁹ Alan compares the body to a slave or a dog both of which according to Alan, do better when beaten. Alan makes this comparison in the chapter "Against Gluttony" and the point is to control one's appetite. Alan also compares gluttony with dung heaps, tombs, dissipation and nausea.³⁰ In "Against Avarice" Alan compares greed with trouble, the edge of a precipice, and with shipwreck.³¹

Not all of Alan's comparisons are negative. He compares

28 Alan, 160-61.

29 Alan, 19.

30 Alan, 31-2.

31 Alan, 38.

hope to an anchor which restores, illuminates, and governs.³² Mercy is compared to a key with which Heaven is opened.³³ In "On Justice" justice is compared to many things, such as Moses' rod, a winnowing-fork, a furnace, a sword, a cure for disease and a measure.³⁴ Prayer is compared to smoke which rises to God's throne with the perfume of devotion and repentance in "Exhortation to Prayer."³⁵ When speaking concerning almsgiving Alan compares almsgiving to oil and fasting to a lamp.³⁶ When there is no almsgiving the value of fasting fades as a lamp goes out when there is no oil to sustain its light. Most of Alan's comparisons are negative, however. Perseverance is compared to grass which quickly withers.³⁷ Smoke and froth are compared with prosperity which quickly passes.³⁸ Slanderers are compared to hounds who bite and scorpions who sting.³⁹ Another comparison is found in the chapter "On the Confession of Sins". Negligence in confessing

32 Alan, 60.

33 Alan, 83.

34 Alan, 85-6.

35 Alan, 118.

36 Alan, 130.

37 Alan, 77.

38 Alan, 103.

39 Alan 113.

sins is compared to frogs stuffed in the mouths of dogs keeping them from barking.⁴⁰

A final method by which Alan of Lille uses illustrations in his The Art of Preaching might be termed vivid imagery. Alan's language is at times colorful. When talking of the shortness of life Alan states that men are merely seed in fluid, then channels for dung, and finally food for worms. In another place Alan gets the same point across by stating that lives are hanging by threads.⁴¹ Dissipation is called a monaster,⁴² while negligence is referred to as a tomb.⁴³ Those who are envious are described as men who dig a hole as a snare for others only to fall into the pit themselves.⁴⁴ It is possible, says Alan, to muddy the fountain of mercy by failing to show clemency to others.⁴⁵ A wagging tongue must be stopped as a young shoot or it will grow into a forest.⁴⁶ Our lives which have been full of thorns and thistles of vices need to be plowed up by penitence.⁴⁷ Our lives must be watched as the stirrings of our spirits may be snatched from us as a wolf

40 Alan, 125.

41 Alan, 26, 57.

42 Alan, 35.

43 Alan, 44.

44 Alan, 48.

45 Alan, 82.

46 Alan, 107-8.

47 Alan, 127.

snatches sheep or our virtues guarded as a fine tapestry desired by a thief, the devil.⁴⁸

In this chapter I have identified four contributions of Alan of Lille to the art of illustrating sermons: (1) contrasts, (2) sequences, (3) comparisons, and (4) vivid language. Alan uses events, people, ideas, and animals among other things in contrast to make his meanings clearer. When Alan uses sequencing, he is showing progression of thought with the final item of the sequence carrying the most significance to the meaning. Comparisons are used by Alan in a similar way to contrasts, making meanings clearer. Finally, I found that Alan uses vivid language to show emphasis and to maintain reader and listener attention.

48 Alan, 135.

CHAPTER 4

Humbert of Romans

Humbert was born about 1200 in the small town of Romans in the Rhone valley of Southern France.¹ He attended the University of Paris and received the Master of Arts as well as studying theology and canon law.² Late in the year 1224 Humbert joined the Order of Preachers, the Dominicans.³ Humbert rose quickly in the organization becoming first a lecturer in theology then prior at Lyons. By 1228 Humbert was the provincial of the Roman province. Later, Humbert even received some votes in a papal election indicating that his abilities were noticed beyond the Dominican order. Humbert also served as the provincial of France before being elected master general of the Dominicans in 1254. Nine years later Humbert resigned for health reasons and spent his last years writing in Lyons until his death in 1277.

Humbert was a prolific writer and his range of subjects was vast. In addition to his Treatise on the Formation of Preachers, Humbert wrote concerning matters dealing with the

1 Alexander Murray, "Religion Among the Poor in Thirteenth-Century France: The Testimony of Humbert de Romans," Traditio 30 (1974): 289.

2 William A. Hinnebusch, The History of the Dominican Order: Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500, vol. 2 (New York: Alba House, 1973), 289.

3 Simon Tugwell, in introduction to Early Dominicans, ed. Simon Tugwell (New York: Paulist, 1982), 31-5.

life of the religious and their communities, contemporary problems of the church, and other books for preachers.⁴ His Letter on Regular Observance, for example, discussed virtues, attitudes, and duties of members of the Dominican Order.⁵ Humbert's Opus Tripartitum spoke of conditions in the Western Church, whether or not the Roman and Greek churches would reunite, and what should take place in the Holy Land.⁶

The Treatise on the Formation of Preachers is not a technical manual for pulpit rhetoric. It is a book of personal comments on various practical aspects of preaching. In addition to a short prologue there are seven chapters which deal with wide ranging topics such as the motives and characteristics of good preachers, the problems associated with preaching, what to avoid when traveling to preach, what is to be expected of listeners, why there is a shortage of preaching, and what preaching affects.⁷ In addition Humbert gives examples of what to preach to different groups and how to win audience support.

Humbert lists seven ways of using illustrations in his Treatise on the Formation of Preachers.⁸ Humbert begins by

4 Murray, 289.

5 Murray, 290.

6 Tugwell, 34.

7 Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, 341.

8 Humbert of Romans, "Treatise on the Formation of Preachers," in Early Dominicans, ed. Simon Tugwell (New York: Paulist, 1982), 375-76.

reminding his readers that not all preachers have the grace to tell stories attractively and that if they lack this grace, they should refrain from story telling. The audience should be considered when telling stories. The anecdote must fit the intellect of the listeners. Balance should be used by avoiding telling too many or too few illustrations. Stories must not be left standing on their own but should be integrated into the flow of the sermon. The preacher is encouraged by Humbert to select only the most fitting stories for use in the sermon. Unbelievable illustrations are better ignored than used. Lastly, Humbert urges his readers to check carefully the sources of their illustrations used. While this list is the most complete summary of Humbert's teaching concerning illustrations, he frequently comments on the proper use of illustrations throughout his book. Humbert cautions the preacher not to string together numerous illustrations in a single sermon.⁹ This will only diminish the thrust of the sermon. Humbert further adds that the preacher must not use only illustrations, or arguments of authorities but must mix together the three.¹⁰ Understanding what is important about a text and what is trivial is described by Humbert as the difference between using all parts of a cow for a meal instead of using the best parts for the meal and discarding the rest.¹¹

9 Early Dominicans, 205-6.

10 Early Dominicans, 206.

11 Early Dominicans, 207.

Humbert encourages the use of actual historical stories found both among believers and non-believers which can edify sermons.¹² Jesus himself made use of this method. Pilgrims on their journey are encouraged by four methods, claims Humbert. There is singing, telling stories, eating, and ending the journey.¹³ The preacher must remember storytelling because of the pilgrims who need to hear stories. Humbert, citing Gregory, gives anecdotes several important meanings for preachers: (1) they are more moving than mere words, (2) they form a lasting memory, (3) they are easy to listen to, and (4) their pleasure causes some to attend church.¹⁴

Humbert uses anecdotes throughout his "Treatise" and these can instruct one in Humbert's method of illustrations by example. When Humbert is writing concerning the importance of preachers and preaching he tells the story of some wicked days in which some clerics complain to an older archbishop that preaching was not accomplishing much because the days were evil. To which the archbishop retorted that one could not know how much worse the days would have been without preaching, thus encouraging preachers to continue their work.¹⁵ Preachers were urged to preach even when not

12 Early Dominicans, 217.

13 Early Dominicans, 348-49.

14 Early Dominicans, 373.

15 Early Dominicans, 189.

immediately rewarded. Humbert told of a nobleman who repented of his evil ways as a result of a certain preacher's sermon and began doing good. The preacher received a reward much later for when the nobleman was dying he prayed to God on behalf of the preacher.¹⁶ Humbert quotes a story concerning St. Apollonius who before leaving his desert hermitage grabbed pride disguised as a small person from his own neck and buried it in the sand. Preachers were exhorted thus to preach from a sense of humility.¹⁷

When Humbert wanted to remind his traveling preachers not to return home to see friends, he told them of a young brother who even refused to visit with his own mother when she came to see him.¹⁸ The brother convinced his mother that she should be satisfied to see him in the next life.

Humbert told a pair of stories to stop the sin of loquaciousness in preachers. The first one involved two brothers on a trip to visit St. Anthony. While on the way they met an old man. Upon their arrival at the saint's cell Anthony asked them about their travels. The two were pleased with the old man's company but he responded that their home was doorless, that anyone could enter at any time, and that their ass could be stolen.¹⁹ Humbert wanted this anecdote to teach that

16 Early Dominicans, 197.

17 Early Dominicans, 235.

18 Early Dominicans, 287.

19 Early Dominicans, 299.

preachers should not say everything that comes to mind. The other story told of two sisters who had married brothers and who had made a solemn pact not to speak any worldly thoughts throughout their lives.²⁰ Humbert praised the women and condemned the preachers who literally gush out worldly talk.

Humbert was also aware that preachers might be tempted to give special care to favorites and ignore others. He told an anecdote of a jester who watched the confessional practices of a particular priest who continually pushed aside older women that he might hear the confessions of the younger women. The jester began to proclaim that old women have no souls. When brought before the authorities, he claimed to have watched the particular priest closely, and that if young women had lived a shorter time to commit sins, and that if older women had a longer time to commit sins and the priest who was a good man and a scholar and refused to hear the older women's confessions it must be because old women have no souls.²¹ Humbert says that it is a serious thing not to hear the confessions of the sick and to prefer others.

Humbert uses comparisons as an illustrative device to make his message clear. Humbert admits that a golden cup is more valuable than a lead cup and uses this comparison to teach that preaching is very valuable since it is made from

²⁰ Early Dominicans, 301.

²¹ Early Dominicans, 315-16.

such outstanding material.²² When teaching is scarce in the church it is similar to times of serious droughts in the land.²³ To show the importance of preaching Humbert compares preaching to making paths in trackless wastes.²⁴ Without preaching no direction can be found.

Humbert even combines comparisons to summarize his thought. In closing his remarks on the importance of preaching Humbert lists seven comparisons in a world without preaching including darkness in the whole world, the choking of wickedness, famine, plagues, desolate cities, droughts, and an inability to find the way to salvation.²⁵

Humbert also compares preachers to various occupations. When he compares preachers to singers, Humbert wants his readers to understand that God is as pleased to hear preachers preach as kings are pleased to hear minstrels sing.²⁶ Preachers are hunters who find the wild game of souls in sin which is the sort of game that God enjoys eating.²⁷ Preachers are also called soldiers who fight against unbelief, immorality, and errors, who subjugate God's enemies, and who totally obey

22 Early Dominicans, 185.

23 Early Dominicans, 190.

24 Early Dominicans, 190.

25 Early Dominicans, 190.

26 Early Dominicans, 191.

27 Early Dominicans, 191.

God in every order.²⁸ Preachers are also known as God's envoys sent by God to handle God's affairs in this world and whose work pleases God.²⁹ Humbert compares preachers to members of the construction industry such as hewers of wood, stonecutters, bricklayers, and others.³⁰ Servants provide Humbert with yet another comparison for the preacher.³¹ Preachers have become the best kind of servants for they understand what their service is and they perform their service with intelligence.

Humbert compares people whose spirits are in their bodies to corpses in tombs.³² The word of God is a medicine that can work against all illnesses as opposed to other cures which are only effective in some sicknesses.³³ God's work is compared to a hammer which smashes hard rocks, thus breaking up the hardness of men's hearts.³⁴ The word of the Lord is a blaze which rekindles the charity grown cold in some people.³⁵ The word of God is like a seed bringing conception to good deeds

28 Early Dominicans, 191-92.

29 Early Dominicans, 192-93.

30 Early Dominicans, 193.

31 Early Dominicans, 193.

32 Early Dominicans, 201.

33 Early Dominicans, 201-2.

34 Early Dominicans, 202.

35 Early Dominicans, 202.

in others.³⁶ The word of God is compared to strong wine which intoxicates the saints.³⁷ The word of God is a powerful soap which cleanses the dirty.³⁸

Humbert encourages short acts of worship by comparing long worship to too much rain that swamps and by too much food which upsets the stomach.³⁹ Those who are more interested in the style of a sermon than in its content are compared to those who are more interested in the dishes than the food.⁴⁰ To ignore an opportunity to preach is compared to a fisherman who refuses to take advantage of good fishing.⁴¹ On the other hand, as a sea fisherman takes notice of storms approaching so a good preacher will be aware of potential sins.⁴²

Perseverance in preaching is encouraged by reminding the readers that one day of rain does not relieve parched soil.⁴³ Humbert continues this comparison when recommending preaching by saying that without any rain there is no fruit produced. Scarcity of rain or preaching produces a crop of weeds or evil

36 Early Dominicans, 202.

37 Early Dominicans, 202.

38 Early Dominicans, 203.

39 Early Dominicans, 206.

40 Early Dominicans, 208.

41 Early Dominicans, 241.

42 Early Dominicans, 252.

43 Early Dominicans, 255.

works.⁴⁴ Poor or incapable preachers lose the possibility of fruit just as lazy farmers gain nothing from their fields.⁴⁵

Wickedness needs to be removed as thistles need to be weeded from a soil.⁴⁶ Coarse soil which can only grow barley and millet but not wheat is compared to those who are sensual and thus cannot receive the seed of good preaching.⁴⁷ Those who forget are compared to leaky jugs which cannot contain water.⁴⁸ Men ought to respond to God's voice just as young lambs, chickens, and partridges run to their mothers.⁴⁹

Just as men who are filthy know to wash so should men act on the word of God that they have heard.⁵⁰ People should be thoughtful and attentive to their conduct as beautiful women are to their dress. When people take off their filthy clothes to put on new clothes they are compared to those who forsake their bad habits for new ones.⁵¹

Physicians are able to discuss their clients' illnesses in private more accurately than in a public lecture which

44 Early Dominicans, 267.

45 Early Dominicans, 270.

46 Early Dominicans, 271.

47 Early Dominicans, 271.

48 Early Dominicans, 271.

49 Early Dominicans, 277-78.

50 Early Dominicans, 280-81.

51 Early Dominicans, 294.

should show preachers the value of private conversation.⁵² Private conversations are also deeper than public lectures as an arrow shot directly at someone goes deeper than an arrow shot at random.⁵³ Those who are too curious at learning the secrets of others are compared to those who are lost at sea while attempting to save one who is drowning.⁵⁴

Self-indulgence swamps one and causes frogs such as avarice, impurity, and pride to enter into one's life.⁵⁵ Just as one traveling along a road does not spend much time in a hotel so those traveling along the spiritual road do not spend much time in this world.⁵⁶ Solomon, the wise King, stored weapons for defense and this encourages churchmen to store arguments, books, and authorities to defend the church against heretics, demons, and vices.⁵⁷ These churchmen, the holy doctors are also compared to cooks who prepare banquets for the faithful from the words of Christ, the prophets, and the apostles.⁵⁸

Humbert uses sequencing as illustrations as well. This device is not used very often, however. He lists four wars:

52 Early Dominicans, 297.

53 Early Dominicans, 298.

54 Early Dominicans, 316.

55 Early Dominicans, 343.

56 Early Dominicans, 347.

57 Early Dominicans, 358.

58 Early Dominicans, 360.

(1) the war between men and demons, (2) the war between the spirit and the flesh, (3) the war between the reason and the will, and (4) the war between man and man.⁵⁹ Pilgrims are encouraged in four ways on their journeys: (1) by singing, (2) by telling stories, (3) by eating, and (4) by ending the journey.⁶⁰

In this chapter I identified three ways of illustrating sermons used by Humbert of Romans: (1) use of anecdotes, (2) use of comparisons, and (3) use of sequences. Humbert's anecdotes are primarily concerned with preachers and priests which provide examples of right and wrong for Humbert's readers. Humbert, like Alan of Lille, uses many types of comparisons with the intent of clarifying meanings. I have shown just two examples of Humbert illustrating with sequences and both examples are used to clarify meanings.

59 Early Dominicans, 346-47.

60 Early Dominicans, 348-49.

CHAPTER 5

Robert of Basevorn

English preaching had its own characteristics. Letson has outlined several forms of the old English homilies.¹ The pericope type of homily would follow the gospel reading during worship and would address a spiritual or allegorical understanding of the text.² Non-hagiographic discourse is a second type of homily in which the preacher speaks on a theme for a specific occasion.³ The hagiographic discourse was used for both cleric and lay audiences and is divided into two divisions, the birth-to-beatification homily and the episodic homily.⁴ The hagiographic discourses grew from the early readings of the martyrs which were expanded into homilies.⁵ The birth-to-beatification homily is less common and no example has survived.⁶ The most common type of English homily is the episodic homily in which one or two episodes of a saint's life become the basis for the entire sermon.⁷

1 D.R. Letson, "The Form of the Old English Homily," American Benedictine Review 30, no. 4 (1979): 399-431.

2 Letson, 412-13.

3 Letson, 416-17.

4 Letson, 420.

5 Letson, 419.

6 Letson, 421.

7 Letson, 425.

Very little is known about Robert of Basevorn. In fact, the only knowledge of him comes from his one work, The Form of Preaching.⁸ The date 1322 was listed as the date of the work in one copy and that has not been disputed.⁹ We know Robert's name from the acrostic in The Form of Preaching. The initial letters of the fifty chapters spell out "To Lord William, Abbot of Basingwerk, (from) Robert of Basevorn."¹⁰ At least one other writer concerning preaching used the same literary device.¹¹

After beginning his book Basevorn became discouraged and was encouraged to continue by the scripture found in 2 Timothy 4:17, "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known" (Douay-Rheims version). Basevorn's final cause for writing came to be understood by the words "the Lord stood by me," thus giving Basevorn strength and motivation to complete the task.¹² The efficient cause for the work comes from the phrase "by me" indicating to Basevorn that he indeed should be the author.¹³ Basevorn considered the word "preaching" to be the material cause of

8 Robert of Basevorn, The Form of Preaching, trans. Leopold Krul in Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, ed. James J. Murphy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

9 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 111.

10 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 111.

11 Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, 343.

12 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 115.

13 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 115.

the work showing the subject matter.¹⁴ "May be fully known" or "may be accomplished" forms for Basevorn the formal cause of The form of Preaching.¹⁵ Basevorn understands that the work should proceed in an orderly manner that brings the reader to the writer's conclusion. It is at this point in the text that Basevorn outlines his index of the rest of the book.¹⁶

Basevorn defines preaching as "the persuasion of many, within a moderate length of time, to meritorious conduct."¹⁷ He then explains all the types of speaking that are not preaching properly so called. Throughout his work, Robert refers back to this definition and makes sure that all his discussions proceed from it.

When Robert discusses the preaching of Christ, he makes sure that his reader's see the illustrative nature of Jesus' sermons. Robert writes that Jesus preached about promises and told of Christ's invitation to the disciples to be fishers of men.¹⁸ When Jesus used threats he illustrated with scribes, pharisees, and the land of Sodom.¹⁹

Robert particularly applauds the preaching of the Apostle

14 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 116.

15 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 116-17.

16 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 117-20.

17 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 120.

18 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 128.

19 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 129.

Paul when Paul uses examples.²⁰ Augustine is mentioned by Robert as using reason to rest his case.²¹ Illustrations are not mentioned at all. Gregory is praised by Robert for using Old Testament personalities, tangible examples, and entreaties.²² Edifying stories are also used by Gregory.²³ St. Bernard is extolled for using rhetorical color in his sermons.²⁴ Robert goes on to say that eloquence, that is verbal embellishments, is not to be avoided, that it is not mutually exclusive with wisdom, and that it can spring from a just and meritorious reason.²⁵

Robert lists twenty-two ornaments to the sermon. These ornaments include illustrations. For Robert, an illustration is a device added to the sermon.

Robert believes that three subdivisions of a single theme within a sermon are enough.²⁶ His reasons for this include modeling the Trinity, that a threefold cord is difficult to break, that three statements with a single theme are what Bernard used when he preached, and that three subdivisions are

20 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 130.

21 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 130.

22 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 131.

23 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 132.

24 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 132.

25 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 131-32.

26 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 138.

about all that can be accomplished within the time frame of a single sermon.²⁷

Robert discusses winning over the audience by which he means that the preacher should attract the attention of the listeners and maintain that attention throughout the sermon.²⁸ Robert lists several ways to enlist and keep the audiences attention. The first way to win over the audience is to begin the sermon with a subtle and interesting marvel which will properly introduce the sermon's theme.²⁹ Robert gives several examples to show the preacher how this may be done. Abnormal physical events can be used to illustrate spiritual truths and this will attract the attention of the listeners. Another device would be to tell terrifying stories.³⁰ These anecdotes could show the listeners the peril of ignoring God and the gospels. Robert relates several examples of how terrible events occur to those who heed not Christ's warnings. The third way of holding the attention of the audience is to speak of the devil.³¹ The devil always works hard to hinder God's word and the proper hearing of that word. A fourth method of commanding attention from the audience would be to relate to them that hearing God's word will bring good things their

27 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 138.

28 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 145-48.

29 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 146.

30 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 146-47.

31 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 147.

way.³² Good listening predestinates a fertile earth or a disposition to proper penance.³³ A last method of audience retention would be to make sure the audience understands that the preacher wishes only to convert them and not to beg his listeners for money. While begging is not wrong, it is not to be primary in the preaching if one wishes to hold the attention of the listeners.³⁴

Robert also talks of illustrations at the beginning of sermons when he discusses the introduction to sermons.³⁵ Robert observes that introductions can be formed in three ways, "by authority, by argument, or by both at the same time".³⁶ When introducing a sermon by an authority Robert suggests using nonbiblical sources such as philosophers, poets, and others with authority.³⁷ When using arguments to introduce the sermon the preacher should use induction, example, syllogism, and enthymeme.³⁸ Robert tells preachers that examples are used in a threefold manner: "through examples in nature, in art, in history."³⁹ Robert uses the

32 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 147.

33 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 147.

34 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 147-48.

35 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 154-58.

36 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 155.

37 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 155.

38 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 155.

39 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 155.

example of a father loving his son as a model for nature.⁴⁰ To illustrate art as a form of example, Robert discusses the confidence a patient has in physician. The more the invalid has confidence in the doctor and the doctor's ability to cure, the more easily the doctor can cure the patient.⁴¹ Robert goes on to relate that we are the ill and Christ is the doctor who can heal us when we have confidence in him.⁴² Robert uses a specific historical example from a familiar source to him to illustrate the use of historical examples. The example tells of two friends whose love prompted an evil tyrant to join them in their love, teaching us that even more so do things work together for them who love God.⁴³

In his forty-ninth chapter Robert speaks of illustrations that are similar in usage to the method employed by Parisian preachers.⁴⁴ This method consists in selecting sources familiar to the audience and then supporting each theme by something known in nature or art, by a figure known in the Old Testament or the Bible, and by some authoritative narrative.⁴⁵ Stories must not only come from the Bible, but may also be drawn from other authors such as Augustine, Gregory,

40 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 155-56.

41 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 156.

42 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 156.

43 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 156 quoting Romans 8:28.

44 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 205.

45 Murphy, Rhetoric In the Middle Ages, 354.

Helinandus, Valerius, Seneca, or Macrobius.⁴⁶ Robert shows the preacher how to do this by using examples such as Christ as king, trees blown over in the wind, towers without adequate foundations, fruit trees becoming brambles, virginity, light, and Nabuchodonosor from the Old Testament book of Daniel.⁴⁷

Robert does speak to the issue of humor in the sermon. Humor is to be used when listeners are bored or are falling asleep. Some jocular stories are particularly inappropriate for sermons such as those concerning the crimes of Jupiter. Humor is to be used seldom and within a single sermon should not be used more than three times.⁴⁸

Robert uses the method of comparison throughout The Form of Preaching. God commanded the sons of Israel to offer peace prior to destroying cities and so the preacher of the gospel must offer peace first when going into a city.⁴⁹ He must first be a prayer before he is a talker.⁵⁰ Robert compared slapping one and then bowing to one to those who praise God with their tongues and dishonor God with their deeds.⁵¹ The three enemies the devil, the world, and the flesh are compared to the three

46 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 207.

47 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 205-7.

48 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 212.

49 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 148-49.

50 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 148.

51 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 170.

sets of twins mentioned by Augustine, that must be overcome.⁵² Robert wants those who preach truth to be clean themselves. He reminds his readers that in order to remove some blot clean hands must be used so that the blot is not made worse by the filth on the hands.⁵³ Just as it is folly to build a home without first building a foundation, so it is folly to begin to preach without first building a foundation of proper purity.⁵⁴ Just as a watchman on a tower is guilty of not warning the people of a hostile army approaching, so is a preacher guilty when he does not warn his listeners of spiritual harm coming their way.⁵⁵ Robert compares a pregnant ewe to a human soul.⁵⁶ Only a fool would make the ropes used to hang himself and Robert says that those who commit sins are just as foolish.⁵⁷

Robert of Basevorn understands illustrations to be ornaments to the sermon. Jesus, Paul, Pope Gregory the Great, and St. Bernard are praised for their ability to use illustrations in sermons. Preachers use varying methods of illustration to win and maintain the attention of their listeners. Illustrations are very useful to begin sermons, should be from

52 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 172-73.

53 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 173.

54 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 174.

55 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 174-75.

56 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 176.

57 Murphy, Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts, 181-82.

sources familiar to the listeners, and can be humorous.
Robert uses illustrations that compare to make meanings clear.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The modern preacher can learn something about illustrating sermons from the three medieval sermon manuals discussed. While each manual discusses illustrations in different ways and from different viewpoints some general conclusions can be made.

A variety of strategies for illustrations is to be preferred. Alan used contrasts, sequences, comparisons, and vivid language. Humbert used anecdotes, comparisons, and sequences. Robert used examples and comparisons. The use of comparisons was preferred by all three of the texts. The second most preferred method of illustration was sequences. Illustrations were drawn not only from Scripture, but also from classical authors, current books of illustrations, common life situations, and lives of the saints.

Illustrations were used for a variety of reasons. The obvious reason was to make clear the intent of the preacher. Illustrations were used to gain and maintain the listener's attention. Illustrations were used as supports for the preacher's arguments. Illustrations were used to appeal to the emotions of the listeners. Because certain important people used illustrations, the texts discussed recommended using illustrations. Among those who were to be emulated were Jesus, Paul, Augustine, Gregory and Bernard. Different

illustrations were to be used for different audiences.

Illustrations meant different things for the different authors. In fact, it would seem that for each sermon preached a different meaning for each story, contrast, or comparison could be made. The three texts all cautioned the preacher to be sure that the illustration not only suited the sermon and audience, but also did not call attention to itself. Illustrations were not to be ends in and of themselves but served preacher, sermon, and audience.

A current popular preacher, Robert Schuller, can be shown to use an understanding of illustrations similar to the ones I have discussed above. In his sermon, Move Ahead With Possibility Thinking: Part 1,¹ we may observe several uses of illustrations that are comparable to those used in the medieval preaching manuals discussed.

Schuller begins his sermon with an anecdote concerning how he started the fund drive for his Tower of Hope with a twenty-five dollar donation of his own.² He tells how that twenty-five dollar donation inspired others to give.

Schuller used four examples in this sermon. Two professional baseball players, Bert Blyleven and Lennie Dykstra, are used to illustrate that the followers of "Possibility Thinking" succeed.³ Dr. Armand Hammer is an illustration of

1 Robert Schuller, Move Ahead With Possibility Thinking: Part 1 (Garden Grove: Schuller Ministries, 1987).

2 Schuller, 3-4.

3 Schuller, 5-6.

giving, and Schuller relates that Hammer gave one hundred thousand dollars to Schuller's ministries even though Hammer is not a member of Schuller's church.⁴ A Chinese graduate student in Architecture at the Iowa State University wrote Schuller a letter telling how the television ministry influenced his life.⁵

Robert Schuller uses vivid language to call attention to his message. In calling people to act he says that you cannot "sit still or lie down, or rest in a rocker."⁶ Schuller goes on to relate that "Some people are dead in the water, some people are slipping backwards; but some people will MOVE AHEAD!"⁷

Later, in the sermon working on the same theme Schuller catagorizes people by the way they move, by shuffling, by strolling, by walking fast, by jogging, by running, or by racing.⁸

To answer those who think that change is impossible Schuller exhorts them to revise their plans, to rearrange their priorities, to remodel their blueprints, to redesign their strategies, to relocate their power center, and to

4 Schuller, 7.

5 Schuller, 8.

6 Schuller, 6.

7 Schuller, 6.

8 Schuller, 9.

recheck their traditional answers.⁹

Schuller also uses sequencing in this sermon, not to make the message clear but to show progressive activities. Schuller uses an acrostic with the word strive: (1) the letter "S" stands for starting small; (2) the letter "T" stands for thinking possibilities; (3) the letter "R" stands for reaching further; (4) the letter "I" stands for investing wisely; (5) the letter "V" stands for visualizing it; and (6) the letter "E" stands for expanding.¹⁰

Schuller use of illustrations in this sermon would compare with the use of illustrations mentioned in the three preaching manuals including anecdotes, examples, vivid language and sequencing.

Fred Craddock's sermon "Doxology" is used as an example of a current sort of preaching in his book, As One Without Authority.¹¹

Craddock simply tells a story of receiving an Idea he named Doxology. Craddock shared Doxology at the family supper table. Soon Doxology was found to be useful in hospital rooms, on family vacations, in seminary classes on Romans, and in seminary among the students. While teaching the class on Romans, Craddock received the word that his oldest brother had died of a heart attack. When Craddock arrived at his

9 Schuller, 10-11.

10 Schuller, 10.

11 Fred Craddock, As One Without Authority (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 163-68.

brother's home, his brother's widow asked if he had brought Doxology with him. Craddock concludes that without Doxology we might as well be dead.

In Craddock's sermon the illustration is the message. Illustrations are not used in any of the ways discussed in the medieval preaching manuals. Illustration is not an ornament to make an idea clear or interesting or important. Illustration is used to draw the listener into experiencing the sermon. Craddock's sermon may be seen as a current example of use of illustration that would contrast with the medieval models.

The medieval manuals of preaching may be used by current preachers to aid in understanding the use of illustration.

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